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THE MAN AND THE DOLL

David FORCLAY was an artist who had married a wife whose every thought was of how she might find some new pleasure away from home. Maud FORCLAY was the sort of wife who had a child and said she loved it, although to give it any attention was quite without the range of her affection; the sort of wife who did not want her husband to kiss her before she went out for fear, the kiss-prints should show in the powder on her face. Yet, Maud was not wicked, even in her neglect, she was merely ignorant and foolish; just the sort of unsuspecting child-woman whose head could be turned with the attentions of such a man as FRESNAYE, an idler whose only aim in life was pleasure. But if the wife had an attack made upon her heart, women were not wanting to take advantage of this state of domestic affairs to make an assault upon the heart of the husband. The most prominent and persistent of these women was Sonia DALTON, who, with feminine craft and guile, simulated admiration for his work, and sympathy for his domestic lot. But FORCLAY loved his wife too well to fall a victim of this kind of flattery. As for her neglect of him, he excused her of the grounds that he was little better than a recluse, and it was right that she should have plenty of enjoyment. But Sonia's seed of suspicion was bound to have a little effect, and it began to make its presence felt one evening when Maud stayed out very late at a party with FRESNAYE, whilst her husband remained at home looking after little Jean. When she came home David was all solicitude for her; he felt that she must be leading a life that was too strenuous, and he suggested that they should go away together for a little holiday down at his blind father's place in the country. Flushed with wine and the superficial pleasure of the evening, Maud declared that she was not going to be stuffed away in the country miles from her friends, and for the first time, her husband saw her in the guise of a doll. The next morning, however, Maud had repented a little of her hastiness, and agreed to go away for the proposed holiday. But at the end of a week's stay with FORCLAY's father, Maud was growing tired and restless again, and after one particular dull evening, she implored her husband to take her back to Paris. By way of compromise, FORCLAY persuaded his father to let Maud invite some friends down for a party, and by the next day, the house had been turned into a perfect Bedlam of pleasure-seeking Parisians.

At this turning point in their domestic life, David and Maud had been married four years. For a wedding present, he had given her a beautiful pearl necklace of 110 pearls, and on each anniversary he had added two more. The necklace was destined to destroy their happiness. As soon as Maud as got her party together, she made arrangements to make a big dance. It was a great evening for the pleasure seekers, but not so for Maud's father-in-law, the poor blind man who had seen his last ball over forty years ago. Somebody had told him that dancing had changed since then, and wives and women also. During the evening, David found himself sitting out a dance with Sonia, and he remarked that her pearls were approximately the same size and number as Maud's.

After the last of the guests had retired to bed, old Mr. FORCLAY was strolling in the moonlight park, when he suddenly caught the sound of voices, but the instantly ceased their chatter as soon as the man and woman to whom they belonged heard the sound of crunching gravel beneath the old man's feet. Instinct told him that there was something wrong, and his sus-

picions were emphasised when the two hurried away towards the house. But escape was not so easy, old Mr. FORCLAY, although blind, knew the grounds even better than they did, and he followed quickly on their heels. At last, he "cornered" them in a pavilion, and stretching out his hand to touch them, he caught hold of Maud's necklace; and as she pulled away the necklace broke, leaving five pearls in his hand. All night, the blind man thought over this problem; he had not seen the woman and he could not see the pearls. Was it his son's wife, or was it some other woman? But whilst he was debating the question in the privacy of his bedroom, FRESNAYE, urged by Maud, had dashed off to Paris to have the pearls matched and the necklace completed. The next afternoon, the blind man found an opportunity to count Maud's pearls one by one, and then in a curiously steady voice, he said; "We have never lost any?"

Completely satisfied, he related his last night's adventure to David, who came to the conclusion that the woman in the pavilion must have been Sonia, and he spoke to her about it.

Some few days later David received a letter from her:

My dear friend,

My curiosity in regard to the necklace incident was greater than yours, and I have made further enquiries. Now, I would advise you to show your wife's necklace to your jeweller. You may then learn something of importance.

SONIA.

Much alarmed, David elected to say nothing to his wife, but he took Sonia's advice, and went to the jeweller with the necklace. So he discovered that FRESNAYE had had the imitation pearls put in.

That evening, Maud and FRESNAYE were acting together in some amateur theatricals, and David determined to bring the jeweller, who had matched the pearls, along to the function to identify FRESNAYE. At the conclusion of the performance, Sonia, unable to restrain her gloating over the success of her scheming, startled Maud with the information that ^{repaired} David was with the jeweller who had repaired the necklace. So Maud learned that the whole secret of her foolish flirtation had been discovered. FRESNAYE having also discovered the presence of the jeweller, had immediately gone home; whither Maud followed him to seek his help.

Meanwhile, Sonia had found David, and suggested that if he wanted his wife, he should look in FRESNAYE's flat. Mad with anxiety, David took Sonia's advice, and ran round to FRESNAYE's flat and entering without ceremony; he saw before him those who had robbed him of his happiness, a doll and a coward. The fierce anger that had possessed him when he had entered now gave way to contempt. The man was not worth thrashing, the woman was not worth fighting for.

Then there came to Maud a consciousness of the real values of the two men, the one a man, the other a craven. With the realisation came something that hurt more than a blow, remorse, and yet the worst was to follow. David took Maud back home, and there he left her.

Though I can never forgive you, he said, I shall not let you leave me. My reasonmy boy. Try and obtain from him the love that you drove from me.

When he had gone , the blind man sat down with her to comfort her , but he gave her this advice : " Think of your child , your home , and your good name ; a wife who considers these three things is a real woman and a happy woman . If you become a real woman , your husband will come back to you .

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